



Prevent Injury after a Natural Disaster

Protect Yourself from Animal- and Insect-Related Hazards

- Avoid wild or stray animals and biting or stinging insects.
- Call local authorities to handle animals.
- Get rid of dead animals, according to local guidelines, as soon as you can.
- For more information, contact your local animal shelter or services, a veterinarian, or the Humane Society for advice on dealing with pets or stray or wild animals after an emergency.

For information on specific animal and insect issues, see [Protect Yourself from Animal- and Insect-Related Hazards After a Natural Disaster](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/animalhazards.asp) (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/animalhazards.asp>).

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if you breathe it. When power outages occur during emergencies such as hurricanes or winter storms, you may try to use alternative sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling, or cooking. CO from these sources can build up in your home, garage, or camper and poison the people and animals inside.

- Never use generators, pressure washers, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside your home, basement, garage, or camper—or even outside near an open window, door, or vent.
- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.
- If you are too hot or too cold, or you need to prepare food, don't put yourself and your family at risk of CO poisoning—look to friends, family, or a community shelter for help.
- If your carbon monoxide detector sounds, leave your home immediately and call 911.
- Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.

For further guidance on avoiding CO poisoning, see [Protect Yourself from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning After an Emergency](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.asp) (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.asp>).

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Use Chain Saws Safely

- Operate, adjust, and maintain the saw according to manufacturer's instructions. Periodically check and adjust the tension of the chain saw blade.
- Wear appropriate protective equipment, such as hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, heavy work gloves, and cut-resistant legwear.
- Avoid contact with power lines.
- Always cut at waist level or below.
- Be sure that bystanders are at a safe distance from cutting activities.
- With an electric chainsaw, use extreme caution to avoid electrical shock.
- Take extra care in cutting trees or branches that have gotten bent, twisted, hung up on, or caught under another object during a high wind. If the tree or the branch is suddenly released, it may strike the person cutting it, or a bystander.

For further guidance, see [Preventing Chain Saw Injuries During Tree Removal After a Hurricane](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/chainsaws.asp) (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/chainsaws.asp>).

Avoid Electrical Hazards

- *Never* make contact with power lines, regardless of whether they are on the ground or intact. Do not drive through standing water if downed powerlines are in the water. If a powerline falls across your car while you are driving, stay inside the vehicle and continue to drive away from the line.
- Never turn power on or off yourself or use an electric tool or appliance while standing in water. If electrical circuits and electrical equipment have gotten wet or are in or near water, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. If you must enter standing water to access the main power switch, then call an electrician to turn it off.
- If you see frayed wiring or sparks when you restore power, or if there is an odor of something burning (whether fire is visible or not), immediately shut off the electrical system at the main circuit breaker.
- Consult your utility company about how to install and use power generators properly.

For further guidance, see [How to Protect Yourself and Others from Electrical Hazards Following a Natural Disaster](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/electrical.asp) (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/electrical.asp>).

Be Aware of Dangerous Materials

- Call the fire department to inspect or remove chemicals, propane tanks, and other dangerous materials.
- Wear protective clothing and gear (for example, a respirator if needed) when handling hazardous materials.
- Wash skin that may have come in contact with hazardous chemicals.
- Wear insulated gloves and use caution if you have to remove a car battery. Car batteries can maintain an electrical charge even if flooded. Avoid any acid that may have leaked from a car battery.

For information about possible dangers posed by chemicals, see the [Chemical Emergencies page](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/chemical/) (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/chemical/>). For information about possible dangers posed by pollution from large farms and agricultural facilities, see the [CDC Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations \(CAFOs\) website](http://www.cdc.gov/cafos/) (<http://www.cdc.gov/cafos/>).

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Beware of Drowning Hazards

- Avoid moving water, regardless of depth or speed. Do not drive through flooded roads. Cars can be swept away or break down. Follow all warnings about water on roadways.
- If you have to work in or near floodwater, wear a life jacket. If you are caught in an area where floodwater is rising, wear a life jacket, or wear or keep at hand some other type of flotation device.

Prevent Fires

- If possible, use flashlights or other battery-operated lights instead of candles.
- If you use candles, make sure you put them in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items.
- Do not leave a burning candle unattended.
- When cleaning up, be sure to have at least two fire extinguishers, each with a UL rating of at least 10A, at every cleanup job.

Be Alert to Gas Leaks

- If you smell gas or suspect a leak, leave the house immediately. Notify emergency authorities and do not turn on the lights, light matches, smoke, or do anything that could cause a spark.
- Do not return to the house until you are told it is safe to do so.

Reduce Temperature–Related Risks

- When standing or working in water which is cooler than 75 degrees F (24 degrees C):
 - Wear rubber boots.
 - Ensure that clothing and boots have adequate insulation.
 - Take frequent breaks out of the water.
 - Change into dry clothing when possible.
- Prevent heat-related illness:
 - Stay in air-conditioned buildings.
 - Take breaks in shaded areas or in cool rooms.
 - Drink water and nonalcoholic fluids often.
 - Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
 - Do outdoor activities during cooler hours.]
 - For further guidance, visit [CDC's Extreme Heat Web site](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/).

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Protect Yourself from Other Injuries

- Stay away from damaged buildings or structures until they have been examined and certified as safe by a building inspector or other government authority. You may want to wait to return to buildings during daylight hours, when it is easier to avoid hazards, particularly if the electricity is off and you have no lights.
- Leave immediately if you hear shifting or unusual noises that signal that the structure may fall or if you smell gas or suspect a leak.

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- Use teams of two or more people to move bulky objects. Avoid lifting any material that weighs more than 50 pounds (per person).
- Wear hard hats, goggles, heavy work gloves, and watertight boots with steel toe and insole (not just steel shank) for cleanup work.
- Wear earplugs or protective headphones to reduce risk from equipment noise.
- Avoid wading in water. Glass, metal fragments, and other debris may be in the water.
- Pace yourself and get help to avoid both physical and emotional exhaustion.

Prevent or Treat Wounds

- Immediately clean out all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water. Apply an antibiotic ointment to discourage infection. Contact a doctor to find out whether more treatment is needed (such as a tetanus shot). If a wound gets red, swells, or drains, seek immediate medical attention.
- Avoid wild or stray animals. If you are bitten by any animal, seek immediate medical attention. If you are bitten by a snake, try to identify it, so that if it is poisonous, you can be given the correct anti-venom. Do not cut the wound or attempt to suck the venom out. (See also the [CDC Rabies website](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/>), [Rat-Bite Fever: Frequently Asked Questions](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/ratbitefever_g.htm) (http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/ratbitefever_g.htm), and [Medical Problems and Treatment Considerations for the Red Imported Fire Ant](http://fireant.tamu.edu/materials/factsheets/FAPFS023.2002rev.Medical.pdf) (<http://fireant.tamu.edu/materials/factsheets/FAPFS023.2002rev.Medical.pdf>).
- If your skin or eyes may have come in contact with hazardous materials, such as acid from a car battery wash thoroughly with decontaminated water and seek medical attention as needed.
- If you have wounds, you should be evaluated for a tetanus immunization, just as you would at any other time of injury. If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a doctor or health department determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary based on individual records.

For further guidance, see [Emergency Wound Care After a Natural Disaster](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/woundcare.asp) (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/woundcare.asp>).

Monitor your radio or television for up-to-date emergency information.

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes,
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

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